

**WOMEN, CULTURE AND IDENTITY  
(A REFLECTION OF KARTINI'S STRUGGLE FOR THE  
LIBERATION OF INDONESIAN WOMEN - AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
STUDY)**

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**Abstract:**

Kartini's life reflects the development of her thought and action as an Indonesian women who faced womanhood, as well as Javanese society and culture that regarded women as inferior. Kartini critically inquired and questioned the rules that had to be obeyed by women of Javanese culture. She was succeeded in manifesting her goals, ambition, and great ideas that could encourage and inspire women's struggle. Kartini's awareness is one of the steps of feminist consciousness. She argued that women oppression could no longer be tolerated. Based on methodological and theoretical point of view related to this concept, a woman's experiences and actions have to be seen in the context of her culture and era. Kartini's decision rooted in her ability as a constructive feminist to make a mature consideration toward her own position in the context of her culture and era. Indonesian society has regarded Kartini as one of feminism pioneers in Indonesia and has made her a feminism model who has inspired the present Indonesian women a lot.

**Introduction:**

Gender issue has become an interesting global and national discussion issue in the last two decades. In order to find the root of the problems, various problems faced by women and men were analyzed through many approaches. Problems that are rooted in culture are the most important because generally human beings' lives are strongly influenced by culture. Therefore, a textual study of culture about women and men's positions and its reality in the society is required in order to see the root of the problems.

In Indonesian culture, as well as in other third world countries' cultures, patriarchy culture is still very strong. It is, indeed, the ideology. In social politics, economy and even culture, inequalities and asymmetrical condition as well as subordination of women are very obvious. In such condition, marginalization of women takes place but is regarded as common and appropriate. As a result, women lose autonomy over their lives. At the end, it is not surprising if there are exploitations and violences against women both in domestic and public area.

Women have been exploited in political sector. It is obvious in legislative sector. In various general elections women serve as the largest voters in board members election, but their representatives are the fewest. The reality shows that women in Indonesia have not been or even are not thrust to be leaders, including sitting in legislative institution. Such lack of trust rooted in the view that politics is public sector and is related to the State's authority, which is commonly associated with men. Therefore, the presence of women in politics is regarded as an anomaly. Women have never been involved in decision making process. Therefore, their fate and future are solely determined by men. Women in politics are only the doers of the decision made by men. Because the decision makers are men, women's aspirations and thoughts are always neglected in all aspects of life. It is not surprising if all things in life are masculine. If there are women leaders, they have to go through hard struggle against the culture that is unfamiliar to women leadership. In the field of law, women are also discriminated. Rape and violence against women are flaring.

In economic sector, women do not have a good access and are not valued economically. Women workers receive low wages and are treated differently from men. Policies in work place and government policies are more directed toward men with the assumption that men are the breadwinner. Take for example labour intensive jobs that only involved men, whereas women's income through sewing, selling foods or other informal sectors are not reckoned. Despite the fact that there are many women who earn their income from informal jobs, the income data in formal and informal sectors are always taken from men (husbands) as the head of the family.

Education, which is an important process for the development of one's logical reasoning, is still very patriarchal. Family will generally prioritize men rather than women even though they possess equal intelligence. Socialization and norm that place men in a higher and more important position than women will determine women's closed and unconfident personality. In the long process, through the culture, subordination of women attaches to society. For traditional society, patriarchal culture is not an issue since it is always related to uncontested nature and supernatural authority. According to traditional society, God has determined the difference between men and women. Therefore, the differences in human life are regulated based on the differences. It means that because women and men are different biologically, their social and work functions in society are also created differently. Men are always related to functions and duties outside the house, whereas women are to give birth and stay in the house. The main duty of women is to raise children, whereas men's is to work outside the house. The difference is seen as a natural issue. As a result, inequality that leads to subordination of women is also seen as a natural issue. It does not only happen in the family but has also taken place in the life of society.

Freire's concept on education sees human beings as conscious beings who are directed to the world. Education that awakens the consciousness of the oppressed places them not only as "exist" but also "with" the world. Next will be explained some concepts of Paulo Freire's on education aim at restoring human beings into "true" individual of humanization. In this case, Denis Goelet said that education as liberation practice emphasized by Freire was Freire's creative effort to eradicate adult illiteracy in Brazil. What is meant by Freire with illiteracy eradication is not only literacy achievement but must also be directed to awareness of concrete reality. It is very important for learners – in learning process – to not only read a text

on the surface and take it as it is. This liberating part of education leads them to be critical individuals in understanding what lies behind the texts (16).

Education as a liberation practice refers to political act, which is society's political participation to create a liberating and better life structure. The essential meaning of education is an instrument for optimal liberation manifestation for every individual by providing maximal chances to do their lives' mandate and develop all possibilities within every person. It can be seen that Freire's education politics direction pivotes on inclination to the oppressed ranging from those oppressed by authoritarian regime, unjust and discriminative social structure, colors of skin, gender, race, and etc. At least there are two characteristics of oppressed people; first they experience alienation from their self and their surrounding. They are present as subjects to be taken advantage from, not autonomous. Second, they experience oppression within them. They feel stupid and know nothing. This makes them feel alienated toward themselves. They "exist" for others (oppressors) and it turns them into "machines" that are always controlled without free will

The question is how to turn the oppressed into free beings? To answer this question Freire started from the concept of human beings. For him, human beings are in the continuously processing history. For that reason, human beings must always be the subjects who are able to change their existence reality. Being more humane subjects or human beings is ontologism calling of human. Therefore, the main duty of education is actually to help learners grow as subjects. Being subjects means becoming human beings who act and continuously work, also becoming free beings who are capable of determining their own life and share their lives with others. Human beings as subjects always use chance maximally to fulfil the duty of their calling and always want to develop without being influenced and determined by others. Kartini saw that education is the way to start all of the things. Through education, every person is capable to see the window of the world and find their future. That is why Kartini regarded that it was important for women to receive good education. This is because education is aimed at restoring human beings into "true" individuals of humanization.

In the study, Kartini is viewed as a feminist who went through various consciousness stages in her short life. When Kartini was at school, her capacity as a subjectivist woman was nurtured. She began to question the condition of elite Javanese women whose lives were strictly ruled and determined by other people. Through school Kartini knew and learned a lot about the right of women to choose and have the freedom including the right to choose their jobs, husbands, carriers and goals for their future. Therefore, Kartini was very "angry" when she realized that her culture and society seemed to "require" her to be a Raden Ayu (Javanese noble title for women). Being a Raden ayu meant that she gave up her life to be controlled by others on behalf of customs, traditions and norms. She had to obey the rules, which are regarded as appropriate, if she wanted to maintain her dignity as a Raden Ayu (19).

Kartini regarded the Javanese custom courtesy as inhumane even though she was always told to do so. Kartini loved to follow her inner feeling rather than to rebel against the authority of Javanese rule, as taught by her older brothers and sisters. Kartini revealed her state of mind, she was very certain about the truth emerged from her conscience. She was courageous to fight against the authority that held on to other truth, in this case her brother who would be her caregiver if her father passed away. In this stage, according to Balenky et.al term, Kartini found her strength in her, which was inner strength and placed her as alternative authority. Her real existence as a younger sister in seclusion encouraged her to think more freely and independently Balenky (7). In other word, Kartini began to shift from external authority to internal authority, which according to Balenky et.al – give women the power to control.

The purpose of the study is first, describes women's position in the context of Indonesia, especially Javanese culture, by learning from Kartini's life in order to understand Kartini's role and struggle for women liberation based on socio-cultural theories about women. Second

isto anthropologically review Kartini's struggle as a true feminist. Therefore, the study at least gives two contributions. Third, it is an understanding contribution, especially in the study of women. Fourth, it is a thinking contribution about the relevance of socio-cultural as one main issue that is, commonly, exclusively understood in society. The concept is related to a typical style of women struggle as reflected in Kartini's life.

### **Method:**

Rooted in the problems above, the study is carried out to analyze the problems of women and men in terms of status, rights, positions and roles in family and in society in the context of Indonesia. This study will explain how far culture has succeeded in strongly influencing the life of society in terms of women and men relationship. It is a descriptive study, which is a verbal description about phenomenon and facts around the theme. Data is analysed through study of literature (books, historical documents and other written materials) and in order to capture imagination, the writer visited particular places (for example, RA Kartini's tomb in Jepara).

### **Result and Discussion:**

#### **Gender as an Analytical for Women Transformation:**

Gender as an analytical tool is generally used by the adherents of social conflict theory focusing on structural and systemic injustice caused by gender. Gender means non-biological differences and it is not the nature of human beings. Gender is socially constructed behavioral differences between men and women, which is not given by God but created by human beings (men and women) through a long social and cultural process.

Since the beginning, women face and meet the surrounding world with their peculiarity as women. Biologically, it serves as both limitation and advantages. If nothing is done, women's limitation will hamper their self development. It is because, in the reality, socialization demand in the society and the opportunity offered to women in individual experience in interacting with socio-cultural value are governed by many rules because of their womanhood.

In daily life, women's attitude is often related to their physical aspect. In Indonesian culture, their physical aspect is popularly interpreted, both directly and indirectly, as women and their nature. The problem of physical aspect has stimulated many researchers to systematically show how women's physical aspect influences their attitude development and their roles. In other word, the different physical body between women and men is an influential variable toward each sex's attitudes and roles. In fact, biological differences between the two sexes are not intermediate variables of women's or men's typical attitude development. The major influential factors in the development of women's or typical men's identity development is how social environment reacts toward someone in relation to the biological reality that the person is a woman or a man. Physically, women experience typical things. The typical conditions rooted in women's biological aspects are monthly period cycle, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and menopause. In relation to this biological reality, there is a myth that regards women as mother nature. However, these natural differences are not to differentiate women's and men's position.

Gender differences, in the following process, result in gender role, which has never been resisted because it is considered acceptable. Those differences are acceptable and not to be resisted because the fact that women biologically, enabled by their reproduction organ, can be pregnant, give birth, and breastfeed lead to their gender roles as caregivers and educators for

their children. The one that is resisted by those who use gender analysis is the 'injustice' structure caused by the gender roles.

Historically, socialization into the determined roles for women and men (sexual role) is rooted in job division between men and women to fulfill biological, economic, and social needs. When a girl is in her teenage year, she has to help her mother's job to manage household chores, cook, do the laundry and clean the house. When the household chores finish, girls are asked to take care of their younger brothers or sisters. Women are taught to obey parents and demonstrate responsibility over household chores. When the house is dirty and the laundry have not been done, it is the girls who will be expected to finish the household chores, not the boys. In the same age with girls, boys are taught to be independent and begin to achieve. Men must also spend more time outside the house to earn money and do any jobs for family economy and family needs. It especially applies in a culture where men must make and earn a living by using their physical power, whereas women stay in the house to give birth and take care of family members. This causes obstacles toward women's opportunity.

The difference between men and women is culturally articulated and it results in an assumption that women are weak and require protection. The (biological) weakness in women is obviously misused by men in unhealthy sexual practices as a confirmation of men domination, a socially structured power relation. The domination becomes a general description in various practices of life that involves men and women.

From the study done using gender analysis, various injustice manifestations such as marginalization (economic impoverishment), exploitation, and oppression of women are found. In addition, many jobs are regarded as 'women jobs' such as teacher, nurse, and secretary that are regarded lower than men jobs. This often results in the difference salaries between men and women.

Almost all cultures in this country still place women in a lower position than men. The strong patriarchal culture leads to unfair relationship between men and women (21). Exploitation of women takes place when women are the commodity and object with "selling" value to advertise trade products such as cosmetics, body slimmers, clothes, jewelry and etc. In this case, women are treated like stuffs. For Capitalists, being a woman means being both a "manufacturer" and "consumer" with the standard constructed from body size, skin, hair, clothes, performance and lifestyle. Constructed value standard also contributes in changing women social relation pattern in the effort to meet new demands (2). Patriarchal system in Indonesia society is still very strong that it contributes in the inequality of men and women's roles in various sectors. Women do not have the access to strategic places and do not have economic value. Many calculations on economic contribution of women are not calculated or compared to social, psychological and cultural costs to be paid when women are not at home or villages. Women employment worth very low and are treated differently from men because their nature to be pregnant and give birth cause them to take maternal leave is a disadvantage for companies. If women work at home, their energy and time spent are not valued as duty or obligation embedded in women (2). In Indonesia context, the regime under Presiden Soeharto government, supported and even propagated the dual roles of women. Contemporer change in the life of women begins when modernism becomes the society's ideology, when the standard and value of being a woman is defined by the country and capital. The burden of being women in the modern era becomes harder because they must accommodate various values. The burden of "dual role", "multi role" and "the role of women in development" concept are put on women's shoulder. The roles imposed on women by the society, culture and even religion limit their freedom. Women's lives are regulated by the duties surrounding women that force them to do the duties without questioning the reason. If

women reject the duty, they must face the society and the culture that control them and do not hesitate to give social sanction. As a result, women often become machines that carry out the tasks without understanding the reason of doing them. Women then complain, look morose, and cannot be themselves because they must obey and follow the rules outside them that force them to do their women duty. Here, the problems that can only be solved by women occur. The society and culture outside women cannot be counted on to change the paradigm on the position and role of women in family and society except if the women themselves change it. We can see a very clear example in Kartini. She was succeeded in changing herself, her fate and women's fate in her era as well as women at present without destroying and leaving family, society and beloved people around her.

### **Kartini's Feminist's Consciousness:**

The calling of human is to be a free subject who rule the unjust world and try to develop a better order. Here lies the difference of human's world and animal's world that is only governed by instinct. Freire (14) strongly emphasized human consciousness as subject because it is only the subject that is capable in carrying out a liberating act. At the end, this communal consciousness will form social consciousness. From the social consciousness built on inter-subjective relation, human can play a role in reconstructing social fabric. Freire argued that human often do objectivism mechanistical mistakes by reducing the value of human and the world into inanimate objects that can do nothing that at the end lead to human failure in finding reality as a process. In other word, human are always determined in the historical condition that forces them to remain under the surface or drowned in the reality. A concrete example is the formation of "silent culture" in the society. Freire (14) explained that human and their world is an inherent unity. Human experience has never happenend outside history; this is one of the things that are sustainable. We die if history dies, history sustains us, history has shaped human. Similarly, human makes the manifested history in the world. In this framework, true human is an individual who is also a doer (subject). The true human is not to be limited by this kind of contradiction, human has the ability to be present and involved in the process of history. The inability in transforming culture actually shows that human is drowning in contradiction situation. Human beings appear only when they see reality as totality and act through critical reflection on the world. All these things are in the process to be. Human, according to Friere is a cause as well as a result from history and culture. In this reality human has actually been able to realize their nature as subject: conscious doer. Therefore, human must wrestle their world and their obedience with attitudes filled with critical creativity. It means that it needs an orientation attitude of the development of language of the mind, which is the belief and praxis acts. With praxis, human are able to change the world. Therefore, world change is human ontologism obligation. The assumption is that human is demanded to continuously develop themselves as beings with consciousness. The obligation arises because they are human beings, not animals. According to Freire (7), human is the only being who has a relationship with the world. Human beings are different from animals that are uncritical and do not have history. Animals only exist in the world, whereas human beings exist in and with the world. Animals do not work; they live in a condition they cannot go beyond, that is why animals live mainly to adapt with their nature. Animals live without considering the time, verbal languages and are drowned at the bottom of the world without any possibility to appear in the surface or rule and follow the development. On the other hand, human beings are capable of self ruling and transcending and continuously develop what they have done. Human characteristics such as reflection, wholeheartedness, bound by time, transcendent, consciousness, and actions are some of the things that differentiate them from animals. The relationship of animals and the world is not critical; animals do not have experience association process because they do not formulate

the purpose of life. Human beings can live with the world because they can keep distance objectively. Without this kind of objectivication, including objectivizing themselves, human beings can only live in the world without knowledge about them and the world.

The difference between human beings and animals lies on the capacity to do reflection that places human beings as beings who relate in the consummation of their relationship with the world. The capacity differ the work of human from animal's behavior. Animals do something as a result of human's will. Human beings can "work" because they are the only beings who act based on their will. Integration with the world is possible as far as human beings use their power to reflect, not only based on their acts but also on themselves as the object who make decisions. The difference of human beings from animals actually demands human to act toward world change. Human beings are challenged to transform the world by making it more humane. Humanizing the world means fill the world with various creativities and instill them with human work. Logical consequences of the statement that existence is a condition of being that is not possessed by animals and some human beings is (26) illustration on alienation over the oppressed and oppressors. It means that human oppression reduce their humanity into stuffs or animals. Allienation of the oppressed takes places because of denial over their rights to name the world and because they are expelled from the status of existing-for-others. This is a problem because denial over all of these things causes a cut off for human beings to exist. For the oppressors, excessive effort in gathering ownership for all human legitimated by their privilege stops them from existing. They live in an inhumane condition; inhumanizing themselves and the people they oppress.

When all of these things happen, society in Freire's term experiences massification: society that has been succeeded in getting into history but are then manipulated by a group of elite and made them into passive and biddable society. Therefore, the society "fails" or is "thwarted" from being a free subject. If so, human existence is not more than animals that live without working in the history. (16) stated that if human beings want to continue to exist in the world they need to pivot themselves on action principle and total reflection, or known as praxis. Reflection and action are an unseparatable unity and have to be a continuous dialectical process. The first point of Freire's view on reality shows that human experience reality as a process. Human are historical beings possessing the past, the present, and the future. Because human are inside the time that continuously runs, so, conceptually, human must continuously manifested themselves in the history. The demand brings duty to humanize the unfinished history. Therefore, humanization is one of human's historical duties. When praxis is seen as unfinished duties, ontologism calling to be more humane is the duty of human. According to Freire, human is the "creator", "recreator" and "seeker". Because human is a subject that is in the process to be. Human beings who fail or stop reflecting in their lives are not authentic human. If it happens, human beings are heading to dehumanization phenomenon. When human beings are able to speak authentically, human are present to "create" culture and give meanings into history (15). This is an important moment because in this way human beings name the world. Kartini is a constructivist woman who always sought for something authentic and unique, something outside what is determined or given. Constructivist women always have the courage to step out from the system and frame determined by authority in search of and discovering themselves and their voices that they are capable in constructing new thingking frames. In this case, Kartini always tried to combine knowledge achieved intuitively with what was learnt from others.

As historical human, every subject experiences reality in his/her era as a problem to solve. The past, the present, and the future are a coherent unity all of which provide continuation of history. Further, it is explained that each point of time is cathegorized by its own "theme". Creating a culture –in an era – is marked by a series of future goals, ideas, concepts, hopes, and values to be represented as a means toward fulfillmet (being). All of these raise "theme

world” in which human beings live. For this very reason, the duty of human beings is to recognize their world's themes. New worlds appeared and are realized when human beings are able to formulate the era's themes. The manifestation of this era's themes can only be done through political act leading to humanizing process. Whether or not human beings are able to catch these themes it will determine whether or not they will experience humanization process. In other word, this problem can confirm whether or not human beings stand as subjects or even fall into objects. If they are able to catch their era's themes, they will be able to respond to the world. To respond means continuously unveil “limit situation” that covers them because the themes contain “limit situation” and are sometimes being in it. As long as the themes are hidden, the duty of humanization cannot be fulfilled authentically and critically. Freire (14) explained that renewing the world means continuously demonstrating the existence of human beings as existing beings. However, in reality, pressure from political elite on society as general is often embodied in both system and structure. Freire termed this as a form of political suprastructure declared in infrastructure. This reality is one important choice of human because the interplay of establishment and change can lead human beings to act historically. A concrete example shown by Freire is an effort of political elite to continuously maintain the growing silent culture in society. One important way for human to maintain their existence is by acting upon the world. This is a process of critical reflection involving political act needed to do by human beings in their effort to deal with limit situation. Existing, according to Freire is to take political acts to continuously transform culture into a better direction for the sake of humanization.

Kartini's life experience, how she struggled to find herself, and how she was succeeded in dealing with various hard obstacles and challenges proves that she is the true feminist. As what Freire said that only the subject who could carry out liberation acts, Kartini fully realized that she was the subject. Kartini has proven it when she realized that as women she must do something to change her “fate” and the fate of her society, especially her people. In this case Kartini fully realized that it was she herself who was able to change her “fate” and her future, not others. Yes, she needed friends and acquaintances who understood her thoughts and ambitions but who would change her future and herself even though she realized that it was not easy to achieve all of the things because the culture taught her to rely her life and future on men as those who were regarded to have bigger power than her (19). Kartini “learned” to step out from the rule held strongly by Javanese society. She fully realized that the nature of human beings is to be free beings. Human beings' superiority compared to other beings lies on the free will they possess. According to Freire (7), being human beings means building relationship with others and the world. It means that being human means to experience the world as objective reality and it means that human beings do not depend on anyone because they are individuals who are free to create anything and to express opinions. Basically, one can never be a holistic human if she/he does not have the ability to make a choice or if his/her life is always controlled and ruled by others.

After the seclusion period, Kartini's will to achieve freedom, independence, and self autonomy was buoyant. Kartini realized that only through education that she and other women could reach freedom, independence, and self autonomy. Therefore, the visit of Rosa Abendanon and her husband to establish an indigenous school for women set a new hope for Kartini (18). She found both a mother and friend who supported her will to be free. Kartini did not waste the golden opportunity she had, she asked a permission from her mother to be a teacher if the school opened. It was unfortunate that the school failed to open because her people were not ready to send their daughters to school. Kartini was very disappointed because she failed to be a teacher. Kartini realized that her will would separate her from the society that was bound by traditional gender role. However, she committed a forbidden and risky act for a woman that is to go outside, to the “world” society. For Kartini the risky and



challenging act she took was indeed a challenge and the beginning of freedom and emancipation of indigeneous women, even though her hopes and dreams ended in deep disappointment because she faced obstacles from her family and people. Kartini's family was against her going to Netherland because the tradition forbade single ladies to travel far away alone. Kartini insisted in doing her goals to reach her freedom as a woman who was equal with others. However, people around her accused her of not being a devoted daughter to her parents as her leaving would be heart rending for her parents. Finally, Kartini buried her will to continue her study in Netherland because of her ability to be connected knower, someone who was capable of understanding, analizing, and evaluating other views on her ambition to continue her study.

When the seclusion was started, Kartini asked her father, who according to Belenky et.al's term played a role as external authority, to allow her to continue her school. Even though her father knew his daughter's will well and loved her so much, he ordered his daughter to stop going to school. Kartini realized that her life depent on her father and accepted him as a figure of authority in her life. However, Kartini tried to understand the meaning of the things that her father "did not" say.Kartini's reaction over her father's decision reflected how fragile her position was in front of male-and fatherly. However, Kartini's "silent" was not the silence described by Balenky et.al as the character of silent women even though at the end she submitted herself to his father. It is important to note that Kartini was not a dumb woman who blindly obeyed him. Her attitude was not a form of blind obedience. She tried to rebel against the tradition that forbade her to continue school but it was not because she was unsuccessful that she was silent. Therefore, Kartini's silent is more appropriate to be acknowledged as imposed silence. Kartini was "silenced" by her father and she "silenced herself" because she wanted to show that she respected her father and realized her weak position in struggling against social obstacles.

School period did not only introduce Kartini to liberal thinking but was, as seen above, also the beginning of the emergence of Feminist consciousness(24)School had transformed Kartini and caused altered consciousness about herself, others and social realities. According to Balenky this kind of transformation is an important part in the process of becoming a feminist. Kartini was no longer satisfied with her "fortune" of being able to go to school but she aimed for higher education and broader freedom after the seclusion (4).During her six years seclusion, Kartini's feminist consciousness grew deeper. She experienced seclusion tradition that was strongly against her free and independence soul. The free soul, according to Kartini, was a gift, a grace from God. She also saw the contradiction of Western education that satisfied her free soul and allowed her to aim for freedom and liberty and Eastern tradition that she regarded to have placed her equally to others in term of intellectual, physical, and phisically. She started to see not only seclusion but also arranged marriage, Javanese ethic, and polygamy as a series of social reality that was intolerable and oppressing women. Kartini's feminist's consciousness was strengthened by her more established ability to listen to, keep information, and her other abilities as a subjectivist, procedurist and finally constructivist woman. It is proven from her struggle that even though she was secluded and separated from the outside world but she did not want to be separated from the source of knowledge. Her father who knew how strong Kartini's will to receive education was provided some magazines, books, and Western literatures. By reading the books Kartini regarded them as teachers that provided unlimited knowledge.

During seclusion period, Kartini's capacity as a subjectivist became more prominent. Her seclusion period gave her time and encouraged her to ponder and think about cultural practices applied in her class. One of the things that she disliked was the rigid courtesy of Javanese noble people. Kartini herself saw how her younger brothers and sisters had to crawl if they passed her, how they had to stood up from their seat when Kartini passed them, how

they had to speak in the the highest level of Javanese language (kromo inggil) if they speak to her, how they had to make obeisance after they talked to her, and how they were forbidden to eat before Kartini ate. Kartini also had to do the same things to her older brothers and sisters. In fact, Kartini's older brothers and sisters regarded themselves as the authority and always required Kartini to obey the courtesy rule.

### **Women Transformation in Social cultural change: Experience of Kartini Reflection:**

This section will discuss the life of Kartini and reflect the development of her thinking and action as a Javanese Indonesian woman in facing the society and culture that regard them as inferior and that limit women's freedom especially in public sector. Kartini stated that she did not have the freedom to make a choice; there was even no choice at all to determine her own life because she was born as a woman. She felt to be always differed from her brothers and her male friends. Kartini saw that men always had bigger chances to decide and do their own choice. On the other hand, women had to be obedient to many rules that limit their freedom. Therefore, Kartini critically questioned and inquired the rules imposed to women.

Patrilial system of Javanese society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century has generally triggered expressions (still commonly used until now) that imply Javanese women's inferiority. Expressions such as *kanca wingking* (someone who only works in the kitchen-deal with household chores), *swarga nunut neraka katut* (the life is determined by the husband), show that women are placed after the husbands, in charge of household chores, dependant to their husbands and their lives are determined by the men or their husbands. It affirms that Javanese women are placed in a low position. This impression is even more obvious if people learn the position of Javanese women in the history (kings) who saw men as the central theme or as those who held major roles in all aspects of life. The conception signalizes that the existence of women in Javanese society structure is only as wives or *kanca wingking*. The strong conception of women in Javanese culture triggers treatments that limit women's freedom such as the concept of *pingitan*, which is a concept that keeps women secluded. In other word, in Javanese conception, "a good woman" must be *nrimo* (passive in accepting anything happen to her), *pasrah* (in total submission), *halus* (gentle), *sabar* (patient), *setia* (faithful), and *berbakti* (devoted) to men or her husband. The view causes people to treat women as *stuffs* or being-in-itself, not being-for-itself. In ancient Greek tradition, the tasks of women were mainly to give birth and nurture their children. However, women do not have any authority over their children after they are three years old. Aristotle describes women as half human or *oikonomia*, a stuff that manages household (13 ). Women's inferior description in Javanese culture structure during the period of Mataram Kingdom, as written in some *Babad* (stories in Javanese language) books, such as *Babad Tanah Jawa* (1) were more obvious. Treatments that place women as *stuffs* that can be bought can be said as a pride tradition and the symbol of one's status. Often a ruler took a woman he liked regardless whether the woman had married or not. It shows that women do not have right over their own destiny. Women's position and future is determined by men, the inferior position of women psychologically has made women to be powerless and fearful in determining their lives.

Restriction and seclusion toward women encouraged her to change the somehow negative habit. As a result, Kartini was succeeded in realizing her desire, ambition, deed and great ideas that enabled her to encourage and inspire women's struggle from unrecognized stupidity in the past. Therefore, she deserved to be named a pioneer of Indonesian women, especially in Java, and a model of Indonesia feminism figure who has made important contribution for the development of feminism thinking in Indonesia.

Kartini is a Javanese woman who lived at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; she is a figure of Javanese woman who will always be remembered by the next generations as an Indonesia heroine. After the independence, she was made National hero because of her struggle to pour and

formulate the thoughts that exceeded her era and all the efforts to defend and maintain the rights of women. Until now, Indonesian people have regarded Kartini as one of feminism pioneers in Indonesia and made her a feminism model who has inspired today's Indonesian women, especially the younger generation.

The tough woman named Kartini was born into a Javanese noble family. She was one of indigenous girls of middle and high class society who was fortunate to be allowed to receive formal education in Dutch school. Even though it was not common for girls to have the chance to study outside the house, Kartini's father – exposed to Dutch education- allowed his little daughter to go to the nearest primary Dutch school allocated for Dutch and Indonesian children along with her ten siblings. What Kartini's father did was regarded to have exceeded the boundary for girls among Indonesian Javanese family and therefore he was regarded as a liberal nobleman.

The concept of consciousness of victimization serves as a benchmark in valuing Kartini's feminism. According to (4) consciousness of victimization is women's consciousness that they have been the victims of sexism and unjust treatments caused by alien and hostile force. The consciousness is stated as one step of feminist consciousness process. Kartini has revealed the consciousness of victimization clearly and repeatedly. She argued that women oppression could no longer be tolerated. Kartini realized that she was the victim of unjust treatments toward women.

Other concept that helps to place Kartini as a feminist is gendered cultural relativism. According to methodological and theoretical point of view related to this concept, a woman's experiences and actions must be seen in the context of her culture and era. Kartini's feminism was born out of her era's condition when Javanese traditional society who rejected women's autonomy and freedom contradicted European modern society with their enlightenment tradition. Kartini critically saw this condition and promised hope to other women to liberate them from the tradition bond. Kartini intended to assure herself, women in her era, and her society that women's development and freedom could be achieved through education (2). Kartini saw that education could liberate elite women from seclusion rule and arranged marriage. It is interesting that in that condition Kartini did not only complain and feel the unbearable situation, but she stood up and sought for some strategy to reach her dream. Gendered cultural relativism approach also helps in understanding Kartini's controversial decision, which was marrying a polygamist. Kartini was raised in a culture teaching that a child must honor, love, and be devoted to the parents. The belief that family's and society's interests must be prioritized because they were more important than personal interest was rooted in Kartini's heart. One of the most painful things was when she had to obey her most beloved parents will to marry a man she had never thought before without being able to question or argue. It contradicted her belief and knowledge that it was not impossible for women to have their free choices and to work. Because of her honor and love to her father, Kartini decided to marry (25). In this case Kartini chose without sacrificing feminism consciousness and vision she had developed. Kartini finally managed to continue her education and get married. Here we see the greatness of Kartini. She did not choose one and left the other but she chose to do both: get married for her honor and devotion to her parents and got good education. Kartini did not want to lose the two important things in her life history.

Kartini's decision rooted in her ability as a constructivist feminist to make a mature consideration over her position in the context of her culture and era. It shows how Kartini appreciate the culture, value and education of Javanese family. She realized that she had the power to choose and determine her life. The choice made by Kartini showed that she accepted her own condition and the condition of Javanese society but it did not mean she approved it (4). Kartini was full of contradictions and controversies. Her consciousness

through some cyclical stages as a subjectivist, procedurist and constructivist feminist but ended as a knower who gained her own truth and it strengthened her feminism.

### **Conclusion:**

Kartini found the strength in her, which was inner strength, and placed her as an alternative authority. Her real existence as a younger sister in seclusion encouraged Kartini to be able to think more freely and independently (4). Kartini's orientation began to shift from external authority to internal authority, which according to Balenky et.al – gave the power to women to control (4). In the crisis Kartini presented herself as a woman who was capable of evoking the spirit and growing self confidence in her people. Kartini's letters and statements, some of them exposed the belief that men could not discourage the spirit to struggle for the final victory that was sure to be achieved (27). It had double impacts: that women did not want to be oppressed and that women would struggle with various efforts to be equal with men. In this case Kartini presented herself as a fighter, a consciousness raiser.

Kartini's consciousness went through some cyclical stages as a subjectivist, procedurist, and constructivist feminist and ended as a knower who gained her own truth and strengthened her feminism. What Kartini did refers to what Freire said about the nature of human as a subject as he strongly emphasized human consciousness. It is only the subject who could carry out liberation acts. If human beings want to remain exist in the world, they have to pivot on action principle and total reflection, or known as praxis. Reflection and action are an inseparable unity and have to be a continuous dialectical process. The first point of Freire's view on reality shows that human experiences reality as a process. Human are historical beings possessing the past, the present, and the future. Because human are inside the time that continuously runs, so, conceptually, human must continuously manifested themselves in the history. This is an important moment because in this way human beings name the world.

Kartini's feminist's consciousness was strengthened by her more established ability to listen to, keep information, and her other abilities as a subjectivist, procedurist and at last constructivist woman. As a model of constructivist Indonesian woman, Kartini has shown her willingness to always seek for something authentic and unique. Constructivist women began to step out from the system and frame determined by authority to seek and find themselves and their voices to be able to construct new thinking frames. Freire said that the true human beings possess the ability to be present and involved in historical process. Those characteristics of true human beings are found in Kartini, a Javanese Indonesian woman, who has been remembered as a role model for Indonesian women and whoever dreams and wants to be true human beings, who dedicate their lives and thoughts for human beings and their people.

Kartini's consciousness is a consciousness that comes from her conscience, her deepest conscience, that provides enlightenment to her that human beings are in fact equal, not differentiated by sex and social status. Here Kartini was present as a subjectivist who continuously developed during her seclusion and in her rebellion toward the rules of Javanese patriarchal society that emphasized on courtesy in social interaction and marriage. Kartini presented herself as a person who could place herself in other's shoes. Kartini saw Javanese women's position in which they were discriminated and their rights as whole human beings were taken away. Her soul rebelled against the injustice especially as she directly witnessed her mother's position that had to face pressures and to restrain her self because of the injustice treatments. Kartini sought for alternative authority source through readings and relationship with her friends to develop her knowledge as a proceduralist.

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